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# Judicious use of Toxic Plants is must in Organic Farming and Traditional Healing

- Posted by [Pankaj Oudhia](#) on July 17, 2012 at 8:30
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## Excerpts from my Jungle Diaries (April 2012 onwards) Part-13

(In continuation of Part-12)

“Its good to see you collecting Datura and Calotropis leaves and stems. How you use it for organic farming?” I asked to the senior native of Ambikapur region of Chhattisgarh.

I was collecting these plants for my experiments on organic pest management in Millet crops mainly Ragi Millet.

“No, I am not organic farmer. I am Traditional Healer and collecting these herbs for patients.” He replied.

“But these are very toxic herbs and its judicious use is required. Are you collecting it for cancer like diseases?” I asked.

“No, I use these socalled toxic plants for promising treatment of Asthma. I am known in the region as Asthma Healer and since generations our family is treating Asthma patients.” He disclosed.



(Traditional Asthma Herb- Picture by Pankaj Oudhia)

In ancient Indian literature related to different systems of medicine the use of Datura and Calotropis as Asthma medicine is mentioned but so many simple Formulations are also mentioned. I have documented information about thousands of Formulations in which these toxic herbs are used as main ingredients.

“Are you staying in Ajirma farm?” He asked.

“Yes, we are from Raipur and for field training program of six months we are in North Chhattisgarh. It is an integral part of our undergraduate program. I am interested in insects and weeds and conducting research on it but at the same time my interest is on Ethnobotany. Ethnobotany is not a part of my course but it is mere interest.” I replied.

“Then you must aware of presence of Nirgundi in surrounding areas. It is important part of my formulation and we purchase it from North India in dry form. We know that the material we receive is full of adulterants but we have no alternative.” He said.

“Yes, I can extend my help in this regard. Are you aware of Bengali farmer Rohini from Bangladesh settled in Ambikapur?” I asked.

“Yes, I am aware of this gentleman.” He replied.

“He is one of my farmers for present project. You can find Nirgundi tree in his home.” I disclosed.

“They name it as Nishindi tree. It is sacred plant for them as it protects from evil spirits. They worship it and also use as medicine. You can get small plant from him and then easily propagate in many.” I added.



(Traditional Asthma Herb- Picture by Pankaj Oudhia)

“This is very vital information. I am living in this area since birth but never imagined that Nirgundi is present in the village next to me. I am going right now. Thanks a lot. Whenever you have time please visit to my village. I will inform my mother about the great help and if she will permit me we will be fortunate to share this secret Formulation on Asthma.” He said with joy.

“I have also one Asthma remedy if you are interested. It is in form of Cigarette. If you are interested then I will visit to you with this unique remedy.” I proposed.

“You are welcome.” He said and we started collecting the plants again.

I experimented with Datura and Calotropis for pest management in Ragi Millet and demonstrated the results to farmers. They were happy but I noted a big question mark on the faces of Traditional Healers using Millets as medicine.

“We have never seen such type of experiments and not sure whether these plants are altering the medicinal properties of Millets or not?” They said.

They were right. In general, considering all types of herbs used in organic farming as safe the researchers use it and recommend it to farmers without any delay. There is no practical field or lab test available with them to evaluate the toxicity of these plants on food crops.

“Don’t worry, we have some testing methods. We use our farm animals for it. Give us samples of Millets. We will revert back within a month.” They proposed and I accepted it even by ignoring the objections of research centre head.

“Don’t get involved in unnecessary things. Analysis of food toxicity is not our field, we are just researchers limited to crop growing. Please try to understand your boundaries. You are here for mere training and project report. You have already done enough work and there is no use of extra work for your academic carrier.” The director said rather warned. But he was not aware that I was not working for mere six months project but for life time project.

I hired a person for collection of herbs and started preparing Herbal Formulation for Asthma. It was the Formulation of the Traditional Healers of Bastar. I spent a lot of time in Bastar during my studies when rest of the students was engaged in months long strike in college. I was in Bastar for forest herbs but the Healers taught me a lot about herbs present in surroundings commonly known as weeds. At that time I was studying Homeopathy for my Agrohomoepathy experiments. The Healers demonstrated the ancient method for preparing medicines from particular form and in return I was showing the effects of same plant through medicines prepared by Homoeopathy method. It was two ways process of interaction and it helps a lot when you make long interaction with the Healers.

With the help of my friends I made cigarette using herbs and then started to meet the Asthma expert. He was true. There was never ending queue of patients but when I sent message to the Healer, he recognized and welcomed me.

“Please ignore the formalities and take care of your patients. I have enough time.” I said. “My brother and mother are there to take care. There is no problem. In special case they will call me.” He assured.

I presented him the Herbal Cigarettes. He reacted negatively and said that we strictly recommend the patients to avoid Cigarette in Asthma even any kind of fume.

“Please try it. I have seen its practical use and the Healers of Bastar are using it since time immemorial.” I tried to assured.

“Its Healers remedy then there is no problem.” He said and then started using it.

After finishing one he asked for another. He was trying to identify the contents but when he asked for third Cigarette I said that it is not advisable to take it continuously. Don't give pressure to your mind as I am ready to share the information about its contents.



(Traditional Asthma Herb-Picture by Pankaj Oudhia)

"It is very promising and I feel that it will work better than my Formulation. We use toxic herbs after purification but still many times some toxins remain in Formulation and patients complain about it." He said and without any delay moved to another room to show it to his family members.

After stay of many hours we interacted a lot and taken food together. I returned back with the Formulation he was using from generation with information about some of its drawbacks.

Later I presented this Formulation to many Healers of different parts of India. Many years after giving this gift to the Healers I returned back for their feedbacks. I got good news from the Healers of Raigarh region. They developed new purification method for toxic ingredients and now Formulation was free from drawbacks.

"It is very promising Formulation without drawbacks. Thanks for presenting it to us as it is saving hundreds of lives." The Healers thanked me. In fact, it was my turn to thank them.

With this improved Formulation I travelled back to the Asthma expert of North Chhattisgarh where I was present during my field training. I got sad news of passing away of the main Healer. I observed that his family members were still using the Traditional Formulation with drawbacks. I suggested them the improved formulation but unfortunately no one from young generation took interest in it.

"We use your Cigarette Formulation for rich patients." His younger son informed. It was shocking. The Healing Cigarette was very cheap and for every one not specially for rich patients. I returned back.

"We feel that Datura toxins are reaching in Millet and if you wish we can demonstrate it." The Healers of Ambikapur testing organically growing Millet said. It was very important information. At that time it was not possible to repeat the experiments again but I noted their observation carefully. Later when I published the research paper on Ethnobotanical surveys I mentioned it but it was edited mercilessly.

Few years back when I was conducting experiments with the Herb Growers of North India on Medicinal Millets I hesitated to use Datura as organic input. Later I decided to go on and instead of extract I used leachate of crushed plant parts. The produce was given for testing not only to the Healers of Ambikapur region but also to other Healers. After their experimentation they gave green signal.

In libraries there are thousands of research papers on use of Datura for organic farming but none of researchers examined its toxicity on final produce. It is very shocking. Yesterday I received an academic paper on organic farming practices for review. I found Datura extract mentioned in it. I have added special note on it and returned back for further studies. Let's hope that the concerned researchers will take it in positive attitude.

(Contd.)

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